

Illinois Early Childhood Funding Commission Meeting (Virtual)

Meeting Minutes

April 14, 2020

Opening Remarks (12:00PM – 12:10PM)

After roll, Deputy Governor Ruiz welcomed and thanked attendees for joining during this unprecedented, uncertain, and fast-moving time, and for their support of the communities each serves. He noted that the current crisis has made the Commission's work more urgent and clear, as well as noting that the Commission's charge and deliverables remain the same.

Goals for the meeting were noted as follows:

- To discuss the response of Illinois' early childhood system to COVID-19
- To discuss the results of the Commission's survey to "equitable access to high-quality early childhood education and care"
- To discuss the path forward over the next several months.

COVID-19 Response (12:10PM – 12:40PM)

Deputy Governor Ruiz introduced Theresa Hawley, who discussed the early childhood system's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Illinois. Specific actions were discussed and can be found in publicly available materials from the meeting.

Deputy Governor Ruiz provided his perspective on how the crisis has demonstrated the urgency of the Commission's work for the early childhood field. He noted that because of the experiences of the past few weeks, the Commission must reconsider its priorities and first focus on questions of management and oversight to support greater cohesion in the system and aligning funding mechanisms will follow from that. In addition, the final report must indicate how important sufficient funding is to the future existence of a functioning early childhood system in Illinois but also be realistic about what funding will be available in a period of economic uncertainty. Discussion on how the crisis has impacted local communities followed.

The Deputy Governor asked if the crisis has any impact on our guiding principles. Commissioners agreed the guiding principles are still appropriate but recommended ensuring the guiding principles strongly reflect the

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need for system-wide flexibility and responsiveness to family and community needs, and building a system that can withstand disruption, including the importance of improved data and technology infrastructure. Definitions of guiding principles may be revised accordingly.

The Deputy Governor noted that the Commission's timeline will have some slight changes due to the delay. Working Groups will likely continue to meet through the summer (previously anticipated to be done by early summer), and final recommendations may not be developed until late fall and early winter. At this time, though, the Commission anticipates remaining on deadline to submit final recommendations to the Governor by next January.

Clarifying the Commission's Charge (12:40PM – 12:55PM)

Leader Barbara Flynn Currie noted that working groups have been deliberating on significant and meaningful issues for the families and children of the state. To move forward with those deliberations, working groups have indicated a need to provide more clarity on the Commission's charge. Given the inability to have this in-person discussion in March or April, the Commission was asked to complete a survey about the meaning of a part of the charge, specifically the phrase "provide equitable access to high-quality early childhood education and care services for all children birth to age five."

In the survey, Commissioners were asked which factors should determine the availability of public early childhood funds in the long run, with several options provided. Commissioners could select one or multiple as well as provide other options. Results of the survey were shown and discussed by Carrie Stewart. Ms. Stewart noted that while some Commissioners believed funding should be allocated to all children ages 0-5 without exception or prioritization, others noted that financial constraints may require trade-offs in the immediate term. In terms of priorities, income was almost unanimously selected, followed closely by prioritizing support for children with special needs. Some Commissioners selected other priorities, notably geography or age. When age was selected, it was to emphasize the importance of funding our earliest learners. She then shared preliminary thinking on what this means for future direction.

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Leader Barbara Flynn Currie concluded the meeting by noting next steps. Specifically, Working Groups are on track to reengage virtually at the end of this month and the beginning of May, and the May Commission meeting remains on schedule for Monday, May 11. Over the summer, Working Groups will start bringing their preliminary recommendations back to the full Commission for feedback. She noted that co-chairs will continue to assess the crisis to determine its impact on our work, our priorities, and our timeline.

Public Comment (1:55 – 2:00)

There were no members of the public wishing to provide comment. The meeting was adjourned.